

Remarks/Arguments:

This is a reply to the office action of June 30, 2004, in which the Examiner rejected claims 11 to 20 as being unpatentable over Cordery *et al.* (US-57681 32). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 11 is directed to a method of mail preparation which includes *inter alia* the steps of (the steps being referenced for ease of identification):

- (a) processing a first mail item comprising a mail item in a series of mail items;
- (b) effecting an accounting operation in respect of a first postage charge for the first mail item, and generating a first postage indicium to provide evidence that the accounting operation has been effected in respect of the first postage charge;
- (c) processing a second mail item comprising a mail item, subsequent to the first mail item, in the series of mail items;
- (d) determining whether the first postage charge remains unused because processing of the first mail item has not been completed;
- (e) where the first postage charge is unused, determining whether the first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to the second mail item; and
- (f) where the first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to the second mail item, generating a substitute postage indicium to provide evidence in relation to the second mail item that the accounting operation has been effected in respect of the first postage charge.

The Examiner has acknowledged that Cordery *et al.* does not explicitly disclose the step of generating a substitute postage indicium (step (f)).

The Examiner is, however, alleging that Cordery *et al.* discloses the generation of a replacement indicium at column 12, lines 35 to 45, which replacement the Examiner

apparently considers to be akin to the generation of a substitute indicium as required by the claimed invention.

We have studied the referenced part of Cordery *et al.*, but can find no mention to the generation of a replacement indicium as alleged.

The only disclosure of Cordery *et al.* is to the re-use of an already-generated postage indicium (column 12, lines 23,24,34 and 37). Cordery *et al.* teaches expressly that indicia available for reuse are matched (column 12, lines 22 and 23), moved to a list of collations (column 12, lines 23 to 25) and printed (column 12, lines 25 and 26).

Cordery *et al.* makes no disclosure or suggestion whatsoever of the generation of a substitute postage indicium as required by the claimed invention in step (f).

It is important to recognize that the presently-claimed invention is not directed to a system which provides for the re-use of an already-generated postage indicium, but rather a system which provides for the generation of a substitute postage indicium in respect of a postage charge as applied in an earlier, unused postage indicium,

Thus, the method of claim 11 is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of Cordery *et al.*

With regard to claims 12 to 19, these claims are dependent upon an allowable independent claim, claim 11, and thus themselves allowable.

Claim 20 is directed to a mail preparation apparatus which includes an accounting unit which is configured to (the features being referenced for ease of identification):

(a) effect an accounting operation in respect of a first postage charge for a first mail item in a series of mail items, and generate a first postage indicium to provide

evidence that the accounting operation has been effected in respect of the first postage charge; and

(b) in processing a second mail item comprising a mail item, subsequent to the first mail item, in the series of mail items, determine whether the first postage charge remains unused because processing of the first mail item has not been completed, and, where the first postage charge is unused, determine

(b1) whether the first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to the second mail item, and,

(b2) where the first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to the second mail item, generate a substitute postage indicium to provide evidence in relation to the second mail item that an accounting operation has been effected in respect of the first postage charge.

Thus, similarly to the arguments put forward in relation to claim 11, the mail preparation apparatus of claim 20 is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of Cordery et al., where step (b2) of claim 20 corresponds to step (f) of claim 11.

We believe the claims patentably distinguish the prior art, and that the application as now presented is in condition for allowance.

A petition for an extension of time accompanies this paper.

Respectfully submitted,

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I certify that this paper is being transmitted to the PTO by facsimile to 703.872.9306 on December 30, 2004.